

SECURING THE FUTURE OF IRAQ



AUGUST 2005

ALL HANDS

MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. NAVY



**In the Shadow
of the Capitol**



14 Securing Iraq's Future

Iraq's Al Basra Oil Terminal (ABOT) and Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminal (KAAOT) are prime targets for terrorists wishing to disrupt the rebuilding of Iraq. ABOT alone accounts for 85 percent of the country's crude oil exports, and they are both being protected by Detachment 22 of the newly-formed Naval Mobile Security Unit.

Photo by PH1(AW) Shane T. McCoy

[On the Front Cover]

The Lone Sailor, while hardly ever alone, stands on the broad granite plaza which forms the amphitheater of the Navy Memorial. This is home of the United States Navy Memorial Foundation, founded in 1977. The Memorial honors all who have served in the sea services and perpetuates their heritage, values and traditions.

Statue by Stanley Bleifield

Photo by PH3 Todd Frantom

[Next Month]

All Hands takes a look at how our CMCs fit into the new Triad Concept. We also go back to a bygone era aboard USS *Constitution*.

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AllHANDS

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22 In the Shadow of the Capitol

Sailors who live in the cultural melting pot of Washington, D.C. have a chance to enjoy the rich history, recreation and entertainment in the area, all while furthering their Navy career.

Photo by PH3 Todd Frantom



30 Brotherly Love

Navy diver HT3(DSW) Teague Mangiaracina takes mentorship beyond the call of duty. Once homesick and missing his own family, Mangiaracina is now part of another family and a Big Brother to Alex. He's also Hawaii's Big Brother of the Year.

Photo by JO1(SW) M.J. Darby



High on the main mast aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS *Normandy* (CG 60), ET2 Ryan A. Legge checks radar assemblies for corrosion. Below, *Cyclone*-class coastal patrol ships USS *Firebolt* (PC 10) and USS *Typhoon* (PC 5) conduct refueling operations.

Photo by PH1 Robert R. McRill





Speaking with Sailors

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
MCPON (SS/AW) Terry D. Scott

These questions are from a discussion with Sailors at a recent All Hands Call at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait:

Q: There is a meritorious advancement program for Marines who exhibit exceptional performance while serving in combat zones. Is there also a similar program for Sailors who serve in those same types of combat units?

A: The Navy recognizes we have Sailors serving in locations around the world, who do great things each and every day, whose actions merit a promotion to the next pay grade.

The Chief of Naval Personnel recently announced the Combat Meritorious Advancement Program (CMAP), which is specifically targeted at Sailors who serve in deployed combat units and are involved with combat operations.

The CMAP is for Sailors E-1 through E-5 who have demonstrated extraordinary deeds, outstanding leadership and uncommon valor while engaged or in support of direct combat operations.

Examples include Sailors who are participating in ground action against an armed opponent, involved in offensive or defensive engagements against hostile seaborne watercraft, participating in ordnance clearing and removal or taking part in anti-terrorism/force protection missions with engagement of opposing forces.

For more information on CMAP, NAVADMIN 77/05 is located at www.npc.navy.mil/ReferenceLibrary/Messages/NAVADMINs/MessageDetails/077_05.htm.

Q: The Command Advancement Program (CAP) provides meritorious advancement for Sailors serving with deployable units. Are there other advancement programs for Sailors serving ashore?

A: For those who aren't familiar with CAP, it is a meritorious advancement program that gives every ship and deployable command's commanding officer the authority to select a limited number of outstanding Sailors for advancement to the next pay grade.

The CAP and CMAP programs are not the only way for Sailors to be meritoriously advanced. Sailors with outstanding performance in the recruiting field as well as those serving as Recruit Division Commanders at Recruit Training Command also have opportunities for meritorious advancement.

All Sailors are also eligible for the Sailor of the Year program, which advances our top Shore, Atlantic, Pacific and Reserve first class petty officers every year.

I encourage everyone to take a look at these programs and also to continue to look at assignments that will allow them to take advantage of the opportunities these programs provide. This is an excellent opportunity for early promotions, as well as an additional option for reaching the next pay grade aside from the biannual advancement exam.

Instructions regarding CAP and other meritorious advancement programs are located at the Navy Personnel Command Web site: www.npc.navy.mil. ■

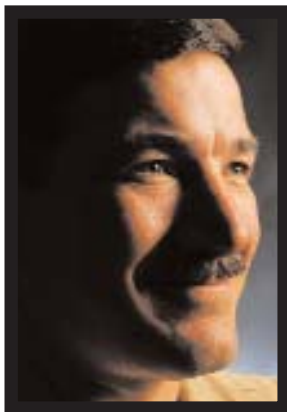


Photo by JO1 Preston Keres

Speaking with Sailors is a monthly column initiated by the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy as a way of reaching out to the men and women of the fleet, whether they are stationed just down the road or halfway around the world.

ALL HANDS

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www.nko.navy.mil

TFU Participant Survey Underway, Fleetwide Survey to Follow

The Navy's continuing effort to reduce the size of the seabag and outfit the Sailor of the future reaches another milestone with the release of Task Force Uniform's (TFU) wear-test participant survey.

TFU launched its participant survey May 31 for all Navy Working Uniform (NWU) and E-6 and below service uniform test participants to complete by June 15.

Each 15-page survey permits feedback on performance factors such as ease of maintenance, durability, professional appearance, and also provides space for users' comments. Satisfaction regarding each of the topics is rated on a 5-point scale from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied."

"We also ask questions in regards to preference and the performance of the uniform so TFU will be able to quantify the uniforms' ability to perform as desired," said Command Master Chief (SS) Robert Carroll, director of TFU.

Carroll said the only difference between the service and NWU surveys, besides the type of uniform, is the service uniform survey permits separate male and female responses due to the differences in the two uniforms.

Once the participant survey is complete and evaluated, a fleetwide survey will be released by TFU. The fleetwide survey will question Sailors regarding their observations of the wear test uniforms during the test

period for those with direct or indirect contact.

"The survey includes questions regarding the current wear test, as well as uniform proposals brought up during the TFU Phase II Conference. The fleet will be asked about their sentiments regarding service uniforms for E-7 and above, service dress and dinner dress uniforms, outer garments and PT gear," said Carroll.

Carroll asked Sailors to consider the areas where they are satisfied or dissatisfied with current uniforms and to keep those factors in mind when taking the survey. He also asks Sailors to review information on the Internet regarding the current wear-test uniforms.

"We want the fleet to take advantage of the information that we have on Navy.mil, as well as the Navy Personnel Command Web site before taking the survey," said Carroll.

More than 40,000 Sailors took part in the last fleetwide survey, and Carroll expects many more for the Phase II survey.

"Now Sailors have seen actual results in the fleet in direct response to the first survey, I expect a lot more will want to have their voices heard during this phase."



Photo by PH2 Cynthia Z. De Leon

Task Force Uniform volunteers listen as Chief of Naval Operations Command Master Chief Robert Carroll asks what they think of the new uniform. Sailors in the Pentagon are testing four different versions of the working uniform, designed as a replacement for both the winter working blues and the summer whites. Dress uniforms, such as "Cracker Jacks" will not be affected by this wear test. Each uniform offers options for Sailors to choose from and give feedback to Task Force Uniform.

Carroll says the results will be tabulated much like the last survey, with professional data analysis of Sailors' feedback.

"Once we have captured all the responses, we will review and calculate the fleet's views."

Once the analysis is complete, TFU will include the results as part of a package that will be delivered to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) sometime before the end of the summer. The package will assist the CNO with making a final decision regarding uniforms for the fleet.

"Task Force Uniform is about the future," said Carroll. "It's not

about yesterday; it's about where we're going and having the seabag to support the fleet of the future."

An announcement will be made when the survey is available to all Sailors fleetwide on Bupers Online.

For more information about TFU, visit www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/USNavyUniforms/TaskForceUniform, and www.navy.mil/local/tfu. ■

Story courtesy of the public affairs office for Task Force Uniform

Exercising Right to Vote Important Even in 'Off' Years

Service members and citizens overseas should participate in local off-season elections, the director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) said recently.

"I think it's always important for us to exercise our right to vote," Polli Brunelli said. "We've seen from past elections that our uniformed services members and overseas citizens vote in large numbers. They're engaged in the absentee-voting process, and some actually vote in person, as well."

Just because this is not a presidential election year does not mean this election is not important, she added. Many elections will decide state and local issues.

Brunelli said it's important for absentee voters to look at all of the issues, state and local, which concern them in their state of legal voting residence. But it is up to each individual voter to decide what issues are important and to research the candidates.

Military members or other citizens overseas can contact their unit or installation voting-assistance officer, call the FVAP, or send an e-mail via the FVAP Web site at www.fvap.gov. ■

Story courtesy of Samantha L. Quigley, American Forces Press Service.

Navy Knowledge Online Announces Improvements

Navy Knowledge Online (NKO), the Navy's premier interactive education and training tool for Sailors, is moving into another phase of service to the fleet.

The Web site is a one-stop knowledge location for Navy education, training and professional growth management.

Unprecedented growth over the last 12 months prompted a redesign to improve usability and ease of navigation for individual users searching for content specific to their needs. There are now more than 480,000 worldwide users of NKO.

VADM Kevin Moran, NETC

commander and the Navy's chief learning officer, noted the NKO update was based on Sailor input.

"The upgrades resulted from months of evaluation and extensive input from fleet Sailors throughout the world," said Moran. "Users will find a more intuitive display with detailed help instructions and will be able to find relevant content with fewer mouse clicks. The new layout focuses on content related to the individual, based on location in

NKO and the user's status, whether active-duty, Reserve or civilian."

Once the new phase of NKO was launched in June of this year, Sailors were able to use all of the functions they have become familiar with over the last several months, including white pages, message boards, notifications, administrator functions and a fully-integrated NKO library. All user-specific tabs and bookmarks were also retained under the upgrade.

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Shipmates



Sonar Technician (Submarine) 1st Class (EOD/SS/SW) Heath Nettleton, Quartermaster 1st Class

(EOD/SW) Chad Munroe, Electronics Technician 1st Class (EOD) Brent Barto and LT Mark McGuckin of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 11 were recently awarded the Purple Heart Medal. They were recognized for injuries they received May 19, 2004, while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Nettleton, Munroe and other members of the team also received Combat Action Ribbons and personal awards for their actions in Iraq.

Ricky's Tour

By J01 Mike Jones

www.rickystour.com



Around the Fleet

▼ Navy LT John Hoke, chaplain for Battalion Landing Team 1st Bn., 6th Marines, the ground combat element of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), holds mass in the middle of Operation ULYSSES IV, a motorized vehicular reconnaissance of south-central Afghanistan.

Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Robert A. Sturkie



▲ ABH2 Courtney F. Godfrey runs behind the foul line as a Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier II+, assigned to Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 223, performs a vertical take-off from the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7).

Photo by PH1 Robert J. Fluegel

▼ AC3 Jeffrey Keever writes in each aircraft on the status board in Carrier Air Traffic Control Center (CATCC) aboard USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67) during flight operations.

Photo by PHAN Antonia Ramos





▲ AW2 James Newbarth, assigned to Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (Light) (HSL) 49, completes a swim relay during the National Helicopter Association Annual Aircrew competition, held at Breakers Beach aboard Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego.

Photo by PH3 Kleynia R. McKnight

To be considered for the "Around the Fleet" section, forward your **high resolution (5" x 7" at 300 dpi) images** with full credit and cutline information, including **full name, rank and duty station** to:

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For more information about Navy Knowledge Online or to jumpstart your career educational planning, visit the Navy Knowledge Online Web site at **www.nko.navy.mil**. ■

Story by Jon Gagne, who is assigned to the public affairs office, Naval Education and Training Command.

Information Assurance Training Required by All DON Personnel

Information Assurance (IA) awareness training is now required of all users of DOD information systems, as stated in a recent message by the DON's Chief Information Office and the Naval Network Warfare Command (NETWARCOM). IA training must be completed no later than Sept. 1, 2005, as a condition of being granted access to a computer system.

The course is DOD Information Assurance Awareness (DOD-IAA-V2.0) and is available at Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) at **www.nko.navy.mil**. The course is required by all DON personnel who have access to DOD computers, including active duty, Reserve, retired, Navy civilians and contractors. The entire course takes about half an hour to finish, depending on connection speed.

IA is the practice of ensuring the correct information gets to the correct person at the right time. That can only happen if personnel take measures to protect both their personal data and any computer systems their data might be on.

The course on NKO explains the importance of classified information and how to safe-

guard it from unauthorized users, both inside and outside the workplace.

To begin the course, log on to **www.nko.navy.mil** and launch "Navy E-learning." Select "browse categories" and then "U.S. Department of the Navy." Personnel must then select "Information Assurance (IA)."

Those who finish the course should print a hard copy of the certificate found under "My Transcripts" and provide a copy to their command Information Assurance manager. ■

Story by JO2(SW) Jennifer M. Zingalie, who is assigned to the public affairs office, Naval Network Warfare Command.

"Healthy Alternatives" Initiative Increases Efforts to Improve Nutrition.

A partnership is currently in place between the Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC) and the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) to promote healthier snack foods in the Department of the Navy's (DON) vending machines.

Identified by the "Healthy Alternatives" logo, DON vending machines now carry a wider variety of healthy snacks for Sailors and Marines to choose from.

"The benefits of the Healthy Alternatives Initiative has the potential to be realized Navywide, as I discovered while working with our Special Forces population, where the use of dietary supplements is a huge issue," said Lori Tubbs, a registered dietitian and nutrition program manager for NEHC.

"Adding calories to the diet is all that is needed for most

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Around the Fleet

▼ A member of the U.S. Navy Parachute Team, the “Leap Frogs,” descends into San Diego’s Petco Park Stadium as part of opening ceremonies for the San Diego Padres’ Military Appreciation Day. The events preceded a game between the Padres and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Photo by PH2 Johansen Laurel



◀ U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Donnie Morris and Sgt. Baron Morales observe as LT John Allison, assigned to the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Team, the “Blue Angels,” maneuvers his F/A-18A *Hornet* into position behind the Blue Angels’ C-130 *Hercules* transport, “Fat Albert,” during a photographic mission near El Centro, Calif.

Photo by PH2 Saul McSween

▼ Director of Surgery, CAPT (Dr.) Craig Powell, (right) aboard the hospital ship USNS *Mercy* (T-AH 19), and Dr. Robert Noyes, (left) a general surgeon from the non-governmental organization "Project HOPE," perform surgery on an Indonesian patient.

Photo by PH2 Jeffrey Russell



individuals who exercise or perform their mission at a high physical intensity level, and providing calorie-rich, yet nutrient-dense snacks in vending machines makes sense. Research shows that eating a balanced recovery meal within an hour after strenuous exercise benefits the body tremendously."

Originally, the program was based on substituting high-fat and high-calorie snack foods with lower-fat and low-calorie foods. As diet fads changed from low fat to low carbohydrate over the past few years, the program focus now is geared toward increasing the availability of overall nutrient-dense snacks.

Other program improvements include providing performance-based foods, such as sport bars and other higher-calorie snacks that replace adequate calories when meals are skipped.

NEXCOM and NEHC are currently working on an initiative to increase visibility of products offered by commercial branded food partners located within NEX food courts. This initiative will assist customers with menu selections. ■

Story by Hugh Cox, who is assigned to the public affairs office, Navy Environmental Health Center.

Virtual Counseling Tool Will Help Sailors Use SMART

The Navy College Program (NCP) added a new tool to their Web site recently that is designed to guide Sailors and Marines in their quest for college credit for military experience.

The Sailor/Marine Online Academic Advisor (SMOLAA) is a virtual counseling tool that eases online navigation and helps compile college credit for Navy

courses and experience for the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART).

This new concept promises to expedite the process of receiving college credits with 18 accredited colleges that have partnered with the Navy through distance learning. Sailors and Marines can use the tool to develop their own degree program with the school of their choice.

Since SMART was introduced in 1999, more than 3 million transcripts have been downloaded.

"SMOLAA really takes SMART to the next level," said Dr. Jeffrey Cropsey voluntary education director for the Naval Education and Training Command. "And Sailors will be able to do this from their work station, their home, aboard ship, or any other location that has Internet access."

Senior Chief Culinary Specialist (SW) Jose Ramirez, USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) command managed equal opportunity officer, is nearing completion of his degree program for a Liberal Arts degree. Ramirez is a big supporter of SMART.

"The SMART transcripts provided a clear and thorough acknowledgment of my Navy training to the college in which I am enrolled," Ramirez said. "It presented me and the college the necessary information needed to make an informed decision as to what course of study I should follow based on the number of credits recommended by SMART."

Ramirez was surprised how many credits he had actually earned through his Navy experience and training.

"SMART is easy to use and makes clear what degree you should follow, with the assistance of the college advisor," Ramirez said. "If it wasn't for SMART, I would have thought that I had a

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Around the Fleet

▼ An AH-1W *Super Cobra* remains on the deck aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS *Duluth* (LPD 6) as a UH-1N *Huey* takes off during routine flight operations in the Strait of Hormuz.

Photo by PH1 Aaron Ansarov



▼ CS2 David Wade pulls chicken out of the oven for lunch aboard USS *Mustin* (DDG89).

Photo by PH1 Robert McRill

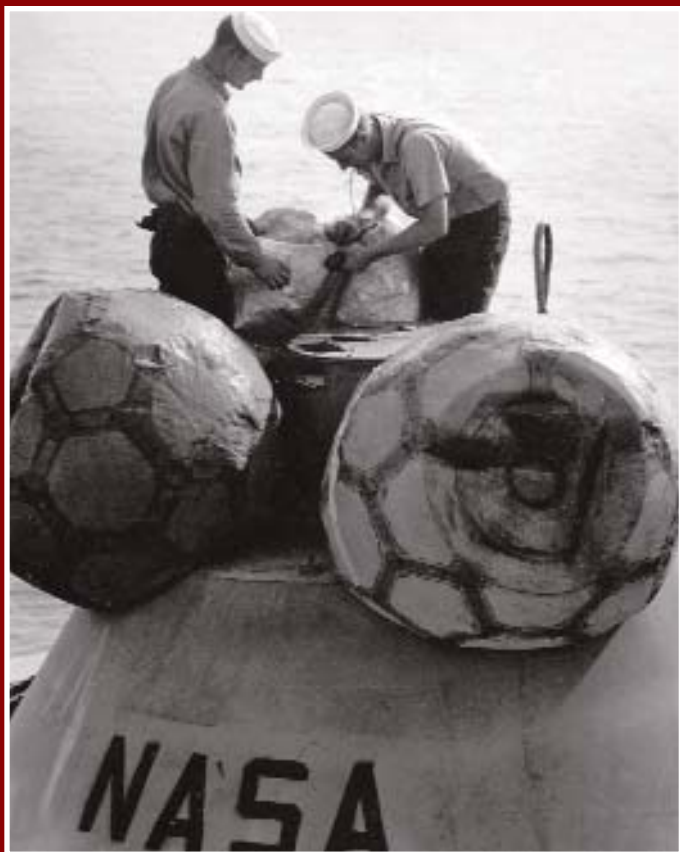




▲ AN Chester McNair hangs uniforms in the laundry aboard USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69).

Photo by PH3 Sara M. Lentz

Aug. 27, 1968



SN Ray Johnson (left) and BM3 Gene Hubert assigned to the attack cargo ship USS *Arneb* (AKA 56), attach uprighting bags to an 8,900-pound boilerplate mockup of the *Apollo* Command Module.

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long way to go in completing my degree. The way SMART keeps track of your training has made it almost impossible not to get your education certified by any college."

Junior personnel are also making the connection for secondary education. Quartermaster 2nd Class Angela Golden, of Reagan's navigation department, has used SMART to formulate her degree plans. She is presently enrolled in an associate's degree program in education, with an ultimate plan of earning a Bachelor of Science degree in zoology.

"Before I was introduced to SMART, I was worried about how many classes I would need to take in college," Golden said. "My division officer informed me about many different programs the Navy offers for college-bound sailors, SMART being one of them."

When I walked in to the Navy College Office for the first time and downloaded my SMART transcripts, I was very excited when I saw what I was awarded for non-traditional training hours; it also made things a lot clearer to me. It told me exactly how many credits I have earned while on active duty and what area the credits would fall under. Once applied to a degree path, the SMART transcript basically fills in the blanks for you."

For more information on SMART and SMOLAA, visit the Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) Web site at www.nko.navy.mil or the Navy College Program Web site at www.navycollege.navy.mil. ■

Story by Jon Gagne, who is assigned to the public affairs office, Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs.

NMAA Launches Online Survivor Benefits Resource

Sea service members can now access personal government survivor benefit information anytime via the 24/7 Survivor Benefits Analysis featured on the Navy Mutual Aid Association's (NMAA) Web site.

The Association has installed three calculators for service members to use. These calculators can provide personalized analysis of the benefits available from DOD, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Social Security Administration.

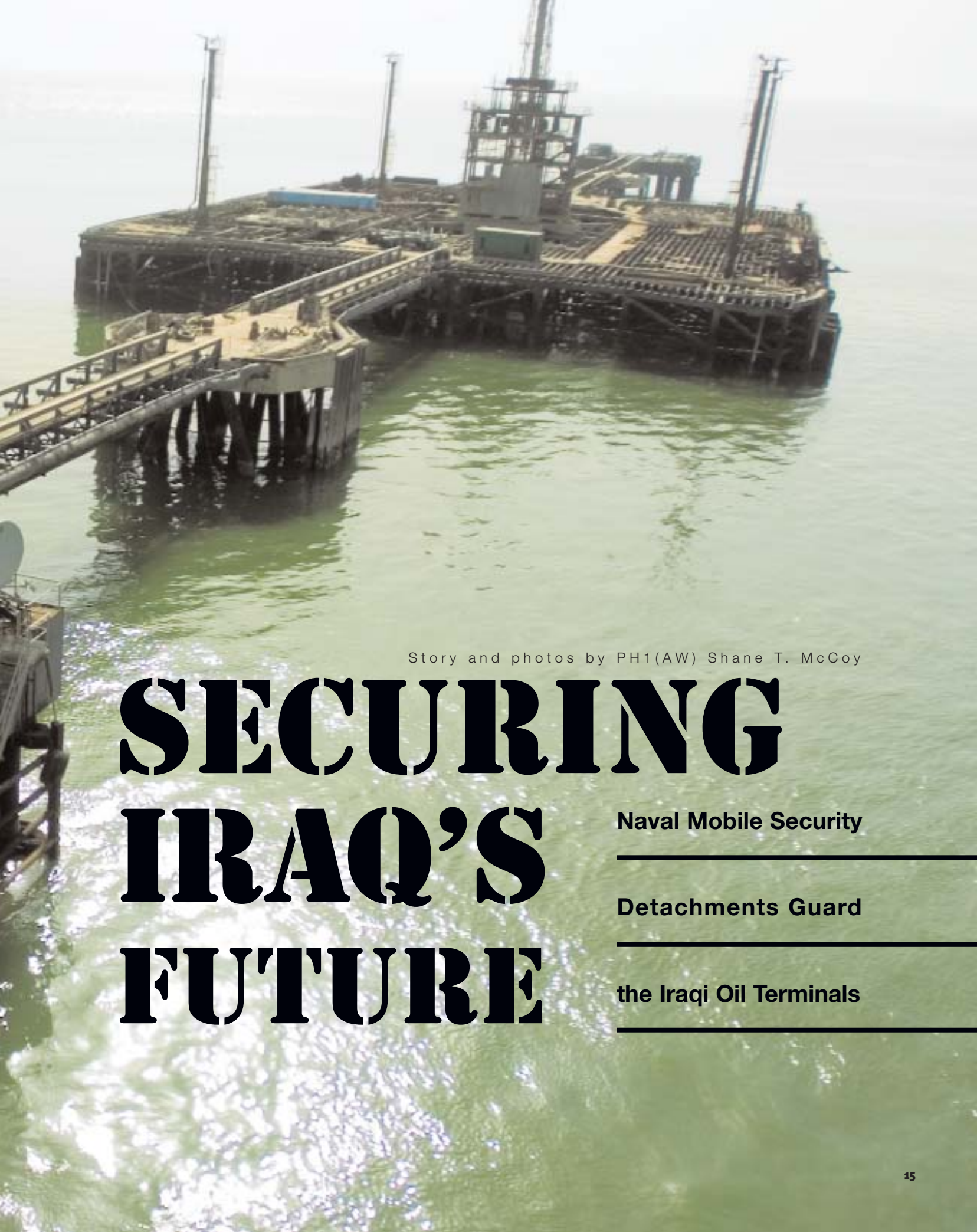
"We feel that it is very important to understand these benefits before tragedy strikes," said Mike McHugh, vice president for membership at NMAA. "The more a service member knows, the better able they will be to make sound decisions for their family, especially when they separate from active duty and leave most of these benefits behind."

To access these calculators, simply click on the "24/7 Survivor Benefits Analysis" button on NMAA's home page, www.navy mutual.org. Current survivor benefit information is posted on the Web site, and these new calculators can personalize the data for a member's family. ■

Story courtesy of the Navy News Service.

▼ **The stacked CONEX boxes** that serve as office and home to Sailors on KAAOT sit in the last few yards of habitable space aboard the platform. The south end of KAAOT was completely destroyed in the many conflicts between Iraq and Iran.





Story and photos by PH1(AW) Shane T. McCoy

SECURING IRAQ'S FUTURE

Naval Mobile Security

Detachments Guard

the Iraqi Oil Terminals

Puddles of crude oil and thick greasy substances cover the rusting, spider-like structure of two of the biggest moneymakers in Iraq. Al Basra Oil Terminal (ABOT) and Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminal (KAAOT) are prime targets for terrorists wishing to disrupt the rebuilding of Iraq. ABOT alone accounts for 85 percent of Iraq's crude oil export, and they are both being protected by Det. 22 of the newly-formed Naval Mobile Security Unit.

"The need for Mobile Security Detachments came up after USS *Cole* (DDG 67) was attacked," said Senior Chief Master-At-Arms Todd Getz. "The Navy needed security teams that, on a 96-hour response, could travel to unsecure areas anywhere in the world to temporarily protect high-value assets. Since then, our job has changed into a wider variety of missions."

The current mission of Det. 22 is to work with coalition ships to keep all civilian and unfriendly forces out of the 3,000-meter warning zone surrounding the platforms.

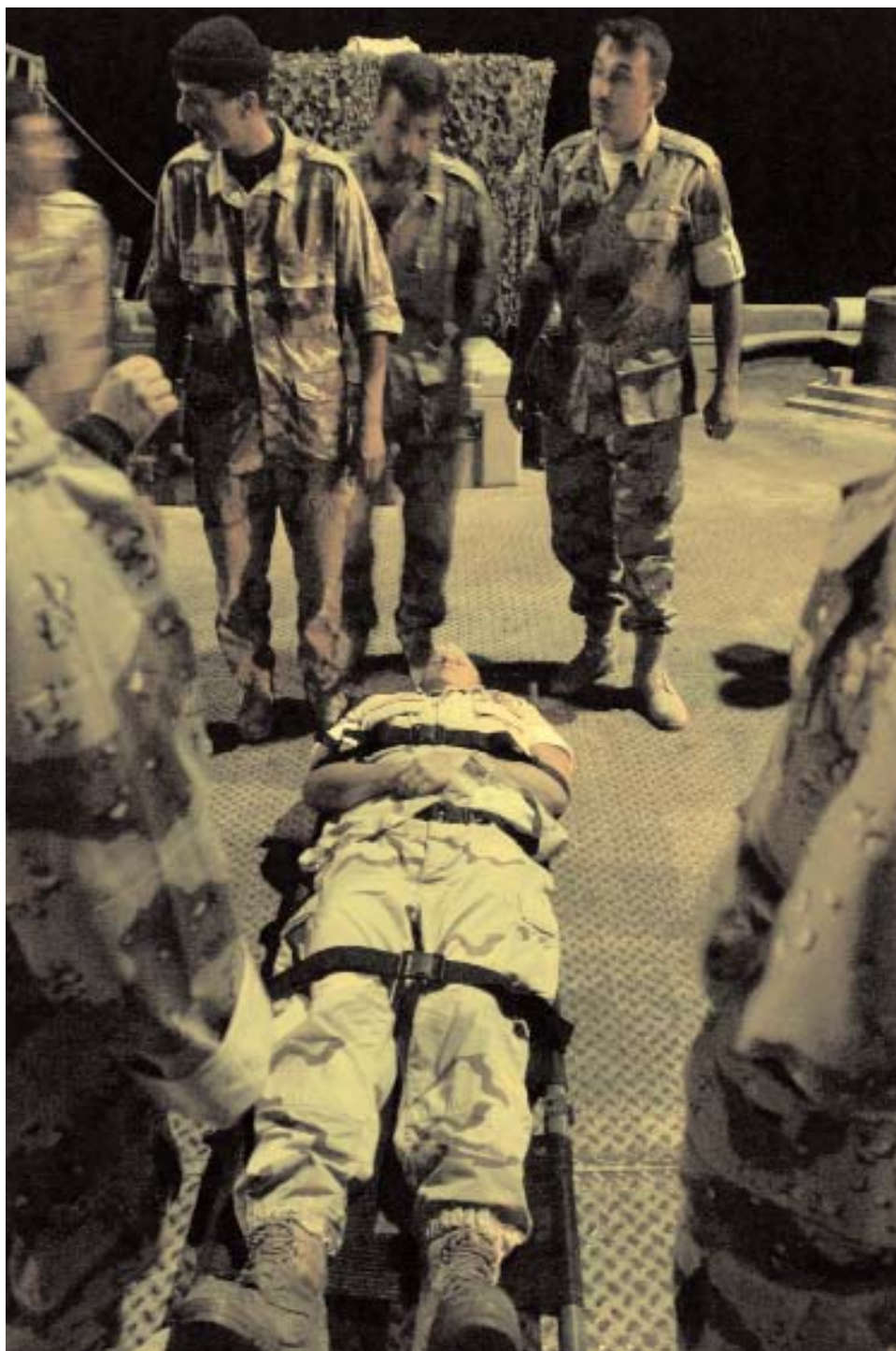
"There is a notice to mariners establishing the warning zone," said the Detachment's Commanding Officer, LCDR Patrick Fulgham. "Any vessel approaching is warned by several methods, including radio and visually."

These are the same rules that have been maintained since the United States began guarding the platforms in March 2003 with one exception—the platforms are now being used to pump millions of gallons of oil into tankers from all over the world.

When U.S. Navy SEALs and Coast Guardsmen first held the platforms, all the civilians were evacuated and all oil stopped flowing. While not very good for the Iraqi economy, it made guarding platforms relatively easy.

Now, along the horizon, ships swarm around the platforms like bugs around a zapper, and like a bug, those ships should not get too close.

There have not been many attempts to approach the platforms. Most were just fishing dhows that drifted too close.



But, before Naval Mobile Security moved aboard, two U.S. Sailors and a Coast Guardsman were killed when one of the approaching craft exploded as an American boat moved to intercept it. Another bomb-laden boat exploded within 400 yards of ABOT.

U.S. and coalition ships are helping to make sure this does not happen again. Each ship or boat nearing the platforms is

▲ **MA1 Martin Roth** plays the victim during medical training for the Iraqi Naval Infantry. The stretcher bearer training is the same training Sailors receive on U.S. Navy ships.

boarded and searched before being allowed to continue on to the platforms. This includes not only oilers coming in for a several- "million dollar" load, but also any tug or Iraqi military boat, which must also verify their identity and purpose of the visit.



For the first few months, Det. 22 lived on the platforms with only the oil workers. But as of this February, they have the help of the newly-formed Iraqi Naval Infantry.

"I never thought I would be standing side-by-side with an Iraqi soldier looking in the same direction," said Fulgham. "It takes a little getting used to."

All of his men have not only gotten used to the addition of the Iraqis, they also train and have befriended many of them.

"We teach them the different force protection procedures we use and the use of our weapons," said MA2 Mark Miller. "We're giving them the tools they need to defend themselves once we are gone."

Not all of the Sailors were comfortable with the thought of working with the Iraqis when they arrived. "I was scared before I got out here," said 19 year-old MASR Roy Brown. "But once I started

▲ **Sitting low in the water**, the oil tanker *Australis* is close to full of the oil that will ensure the future and rebuilding of Iraq.

► **MA2 David Wampler** uses hand signals to train a member of the Iraqi Naval Infantry how to load a .50-caliber machine gun, used for defense of the platforms.

talking to the Iraqis, I found they are just like us."

Talking, in most cases, involves using hand signals, pointing and using Iraqi/English dictionaries. At times, it can be difficult for both Americans and Iraqis, but they make do out of necessity.

"When we first got out here, we didn't have any hot water tanks and I was working with an Iraqi named Safar," explained MA1 Eric Schotter. "Even though we couldn't speak the same language, we were able to get everything



ΣΤΡΑΛΙΣ

ΧΙΟΣ

MO NO. 9284946



▲ **MA1 Stan Kubat** returns supplies to the “Meals on Keels” crew after receiving breakfast for the day.

◀ **Three times a day**, the “Meals on Keels” run comes to each of the platforms to bring food, mail and any passengers or supplies the platforms might need.

set up by show-and-tell. I would show him what I wanted to see happen, and he would figure out what I meant. It took a while, but we got it done.”

Soon a full Iraqi platoon will be coming to ABOT and Det. 22 to start integrating into the defense of the station. Eventually, protection will be primarily Iraqi, with a few American troops. The importance of the job they are doing is not lost on the Sailors. They are setting the standards by which the Iraqi Naval Infantry will operate from now on. “We have seamen and third classes training a brand new military,” said Fulgham.

Det. 22 is the second unit from Naval Mobile Security to deploy to the oil platforms since the Navy took over defense from the Marines. When the Marines were in charge of platform security, life was much different.

“The quality of life is pretty good compared to when the last detachment was

out here,” said MA3 Trina Drulard. “We have made a lot of improvements. At one time, the people guarding the platforms were sleeping outside on cots, with no hot water, no phone, computers or Internet.”

Improving quality of life was one of the top priorities on the platforms for a long time. When SEALs first arrived on the platforms at the beginning of Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, workers living aboard did not have a facility to shower, and most of the food eaten was caught in the same foul water that was used to carry away human waste and garbage. Some of the first U.S. Coast Guardsmen who lived aboard used inflated emergency life rafts to sleep inside. Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) were the standard meal, and entertainment was limited to a few board games.

Now, Sailors sleep in four-man CONEX boxes, which are both heated and air conditioned. More CONEX boxes were brought in with showers, washing machines and dryers. Satellite dishes were set up for Internet, television and telephones. According to Fulgham, the Internet is so fast that many of the Sailors from surrounding ships come to the platforms to use it.

“We have better Internet than they have at Kuwait Naval Base and better telephones than any of the ships out here,” said Fulgham proudly.

The telephones are working on a new SPAWAR system that costs Sailors only four cents a minute on a rechargeable pin number purchased online.

When satellite television was first set up for these Sailors, they were able to watch local middle-eastern channels and pick up BBC. The day before the Super Bowl, American Forces Radio and Television Services (AFRTS) was hooked up so the game could be watched live.

But entertainment is only a small part of keeping up the Sailor’s morale. There is an old saying in the Navy: “You can judge the morale of a command by the quality of food served in its mess.” During rough seas, platform Sailors still eat MREs, but when seas are calm, “morale” comes skipping over the Gulf waters from the coalition ships.



▲ **MA2 Ron Repasz leaves** what KAAOT Sailors call the “staircase to nowhere” a staircase that goes right into the water, on the non-functional end of KAAOT. Due to damage from years of warring with neighboring countries, there is currently only one working fuel station on KAAOT.

It’s called “Meals on Keels,” and three times a day, they are welcomed to the platforms by the residents. From bowls of cereal to steak and potatoes, the Sailors eat well.

“Support from the ships has been outstanding for the most part,” said Fulgham. “Meals on Keels is the key to making life here tolerable.”

While U.S. ships supply the majority of the meals, many other navies, including British and Australian, also send supplies to the platforms.

Life has become comfortable enough on the platforms that once the Sailors get used to the dirt and oil, most prefer to live there



than on a ship.

“It’s a little bit better than a ship,” said Getz. “The only problem is that on KAAOT we have only a thousand meters of habitability, and half of that is the Iraqis’ territory.”

To some, the limited space is an issue, but most claim they would much rather feel the wind on their face as they stand their watches than be looking at a console



inside the skin of a ship.

“The upside of living on a ship is that you know at some point you will hit a port,” said Getz. “When we are here it’s for six months solid, and we can get a little stir crazy after a while.”

Living conditions are improving for the Iraqi platform workers and military aboard, also. The living quarters on ABOT are now getting a \$300,000 makeover. The interior

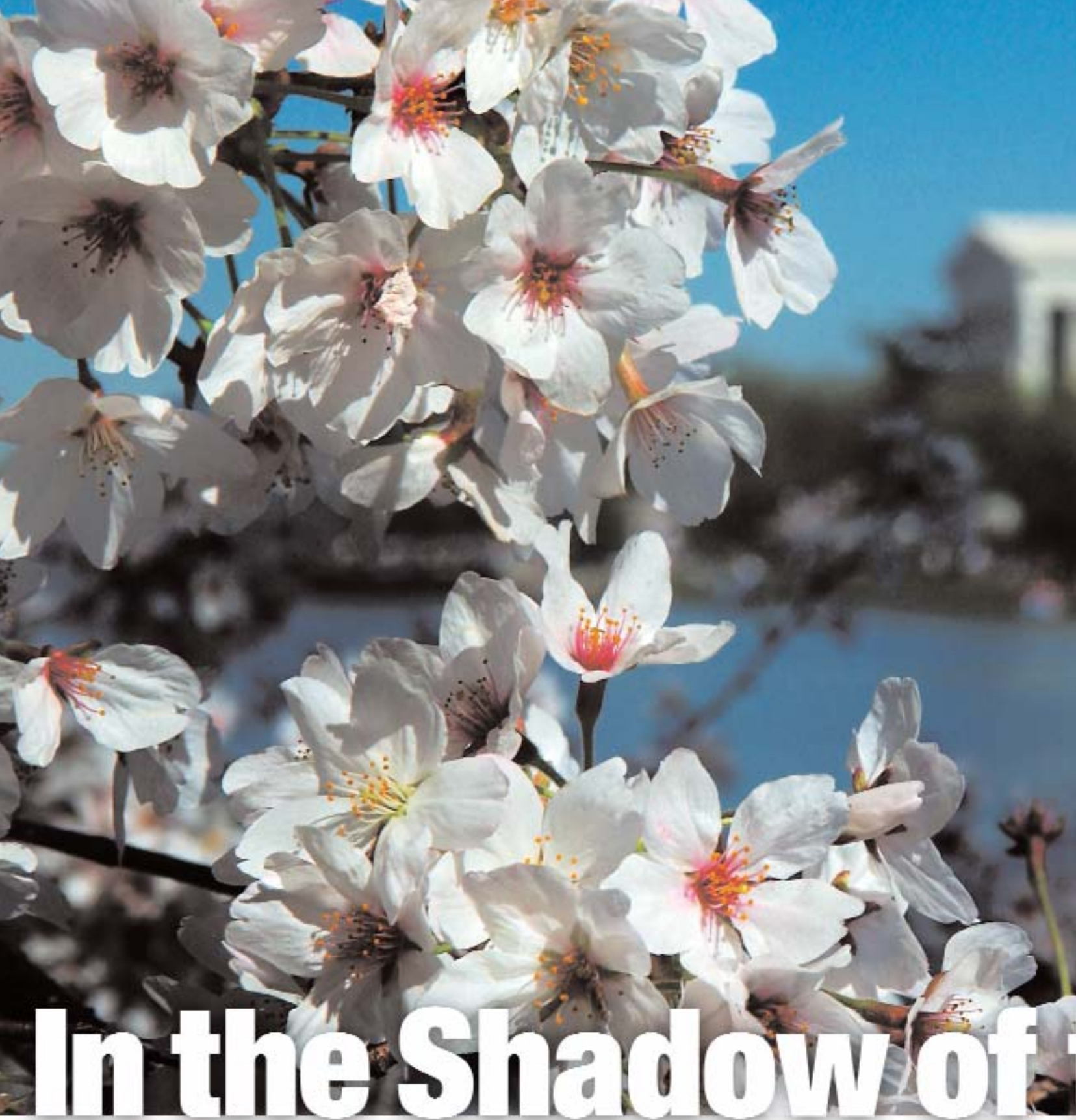
is being completely refurbished, and the exterior is receiving a new coat of paint.

When the oil platforms are eventually left in the hands of South Oil Company and the Iraqi Naval Infantry, they will be in better working condition to make money for Iraq than ever before. Iraq will also be better prepared and trained to defend them. The security brought to Iraq by Naval Mobile Security

▲ **Miles off the coast** of Iraq, the platforms make a tempting target for insurgents except for the protection by U.S. Navy Sailors and the Iraqi Naval Infantry they are training.

will be felt not only while they are aboard, but far into the future of the newly-freed country. ■

McCoy is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.



In the Shadow of



◀ The blossoming of the cherry trees

around the Tidal Basin has come to symbolize the natural beauty of our nation's capital. The trees, a gift from Japan in 1912, signal the coming of spring with an explosion of life and color that surround the Jefferson Memorial in a sea of pale pink and white.

O

n a lush field of green, players soak up the afternoon sun during a pick-up soccer game. A loud chorus of chanting, screaming spectators in the distance does not faze the determined athletes. These guys want to score a goal; most attempts end up with one unlucky player having to gingerly recover the ball from the crush of big-city traffic.

Sweat pours from their brows, yet their faces glow with determined smiles. While they enjoy their game, these highly competitive individuals are totally oblivious to the looming presence of the U.S. Capitol, a mere 100 yards away.

Sailors who live in this cultural melting pot of Washington, D.C., have a chance to enjoy the rich history, recreation and entertainment of the area, all while furthering their Navy career.

According to Aerographer's Mate 2nd Class Jenny Backer of the Naval Ice Center, those aspects of life in the District go hand-in-hand.

Story by PH3 Todd Frantom
and JO1 Charles L. Ludwig,
photos by PH3 Todd Frantom

“The work can be hard at times, but it feels like you are at the center of the universe here. I know what I do here directly affects decisions made throughout the entire Navy.”

- AE2 Jenny Backer
Naval Ice Center, the Pentagon

“There is no escaping the statues and history of D.C. It’s everywhere,” Backer said. “I’ve been doing all I can to take in the history of the area. The more I learn about it, the more proud I am of my job.”

That connection goes back a long way, as the Navy and the nation’s capital share a bond that dates back to the early days of the country.

Since the opening of the Washington Navy Yard in 1799, when ships were built and repaired there, the Navy has maintained a constant presence within the District of Columbia’s borders for more than 200 years. In that time, the Navy’s tradition in the area grew as the city developed around it.

That tradition continues to flourish today, as the Washington Navy Yard, the oldest of the service’s shore installations, is now a part of the larger Naval District Washington (NDW). No longer a shipyard, the Navy Yard now houses NDW, established in 1965, which encompasses more than 4,000 square miles of land in the District and surrounding Maryland and Virginia.

NDW also employs more than 71,000 military and civilian employees. A large number of those employees work within nationally known establishments, such as the Pentagon, White House, the Naval Observatory and the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC).

Despite the diverse missions of the District’s many commands, virtually all



of them share one thing in common. They are among the starting points for nearly all Navy action.

The Naval Ice Center, Backer’s duty station, sits snugly within the secured stone walls of the Pentagon. There, she and other Sailors provide worldwide analysis and

forecast of ice cover – thickness, density, and movement – to DOD and other U.S. agencies.

Those responsibilities include having a hand in ship and sub movement, directly affecting the course of naval operations in the world’s oceans.



It all makes for a somewhat demanding but rewarding job, Backer said. “The work can be hard at times, but it feels like you are at the center of the universe here. I know what I do here directly affects decisions made throughout the entire Navy.”

For many, it’s all about opportunity – the

opportunity to excel in their Navy career, especially at the Pentagon. Deep in the heart of the building is the Navy Operations Center (NOC). Here world-wide Navy operations are monitored for daily reports to the Chief of Naval Operations. Electronics Technician 2nd

▲ **The National Mall**, with its open spaces and parklands envisioned by George Washington and French Architect Pierre L’Enfant, is open to everyone. Tourists and residents alike enjoy many different recreation events on the open areas of the Mall.

Class (SW/AW) Joselito Palaganas maintains various command and control systems on the watch floor there.

"I've learned a lot working at the center. I get to see the upper echelon of the Navy in operation," Palaganas said. "We stay very busy. These systems are very high visibility. We have a live world view of all military movements, both Navy and joint."

According to Palaganas, the NOC was an especially interesting place to work during the beginning of Operation *Iraqi Freedom* in March 2003, when war seemed imminent.

"We were already preparing our briefs, so we were ready," he said. "The watch floor is an incredible place with all the high-tech equipment, but at that time, it looked like we were about to launch a space shuttle from in here."

"It was exciting because we knew we were at war and we had a job to do. We just did it," Palaganas continued. "Some of us wished we were over there, but at the same time we were proud of what we were doing."

The sentiments of Palaganas and Backer are echoed by Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Carla Santiago, assigned to NNMC, Bethesda, Md. She works in the executive health department, coordinating patient care programs for officers and government officials.

"Here, I am in charge of organizing and planning most workloads in my department," said Santiago. "I feel like I am at the starting point of the Navy's health care system. When I go out into the fleet, I'm sure the knowledge and experience I've gained here will be important at whatever job I do. I work directly with doctors and nurses and true professionals in the health field. This is a great experience for me."

Backer maintains that the stressful nature of Washington jobs makes off-duty time seem even more important than usual.

► **President George W. Bush** peers into the crowd of a sold out game at RFK stadium, Washington, D.C., seconds before throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at the first regular season Major League baseball game in the capital in 34 years.

"My job does make me feel important; but, when the work is done, there's plenty of time for play, and there's so much to do here," said Backer.

Washington is a city that seems to be one of those stereotypical destinations that features "something for everyone." And in the case of D.C., that's hard to dispute.

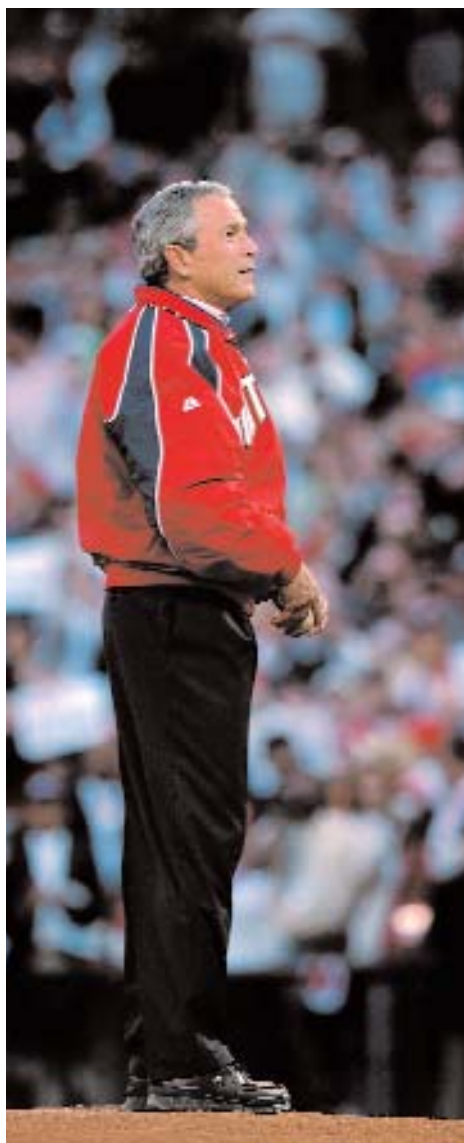
For lovers of history and sightseeing, a trip to downtown Washington can showcase many of the monuments and museums featuring artifacts kids have only read about in schoolbooks. A look to the right reveals the Washington Monument; to the left the Lincoln Memorial. And it's surrounded by an entire chain of Smithsonian Museums, covering everything from American and natural history,

to aviation and art.

For sports enthusiasts, along with being able to play various games on the National Mall, they have many ways to spend their entertainment buck. The District is one of the only cities in the country hosting all four "major" sports, with the NFL's Redskins, NBA's Wizards, NHL's Capitals, and MLB's newly-minted Nationals all calling the metropolitan area home.

All that goes along with the city's seemingly endless supply of festivals, an opera company, outdoor concerts, live theater and city tours.

"My son really loves the 'duck' tour," said Backer of the sightseeing outing on a remodeled World War II amphibious assault vehicle. These tour boats are



equipped with wheels, so it's possible to see D.C. from both the river and land, and gives passengers a view of the capital

► **Sailors attached** to a joint Ceremonial Guard walk alongside the horse-drawn caisson carrying former President Ronald Reagan during his historic funeral procession in June of 2004. The Ceremonial Guard performs various events in the National Capital area that include: funeral details at Arlington National Cemetery; functions at the Pentagon and White House; and wreath laying ceremonies at various memorial services.

▼ **The Nationals** make history in the District as they take the field in their 2005 home opener at RFK Stadium. It was the first regular season game in Washington since the Senators forfeited their last game to the New York Yankees on Sept. 30, 1971. The Nationals beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 5-3.





▲ **A mounted attack** is demonstrated by a unit of horse cavalry during a Civil War reenactment near Washington, D.C. Many historic battles were fought in and around the capital area.

unlike any they have seen before.

“It is really cool to see the monuments from these different angles,” Backer said.

“It’s also nice to get the historic sites explained to you by the tour guides.”

Getting around the city is relatively easy, even for Sailors who don’t own a car. That’s because the city’s public transportation system, known as the Metro, uses its subways and buses to ensure most people

are only minutes away from many of the area’s sights and landmarks.

Those buses and subway cars can introduce people to an entire new world. At any stop along the rail system, which extends south into Virginia and north into Maryland, people can experience an



▲ **A veteran mourns the loss of his** friends during his first visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As of 2005 there were 58,249 names inscribed on the wall in recognition of service members who made the supreme sacrifice during one of the most divisive wars in our nation's history.

from foreign countries have brought their foods here with them, enriching the Washington dining experience. Restaurants serving everything from Thai, Indian, Lebanese, Ethiopian and Asian cuisines stand shoulder-to-shoulder along the streets of the District.

"I really enjoy trying ethnic foods in Washington. I've never been to a duty station that offered so many different foods," said Backer.

Between the monuments, museums, festivals, sports and other attractions, Washington is predictably one of the country's largest tourist sites, drawing nearly 20 million people to the area each year.

Aside from the "fun" things that occupy their off-duty time, many Sailors say they get a real sense of satisfaction out of their duty in Washington.

"I'm going to be sorry to leave this

place," said Palaganas. "I love the area. It's incredible with all the recreation, museums, great restaurants. You name it. It's here. I'm definitely going to try to come back for all that's offered here."

Santiago added, "I have grown up while stationed in D.C. and feel much more confident and aware of what it means to be a Sailor because of my time here."

Her understanding of what it means to be stationed in the nation's capital sums up how many Sailors feel about their time here. For them, working in the District isn't just 'work,' it's an experience. ■

Frantom and Ludwig are photojournalists assigned to All Hands.

endless parade of ethnic variety.

"I've never experienced a city so full of people from all walks of life," said Backer. "No matter where you go, you are sure to run into someone from a completely different culture."

In many cases, District residents hailing

Website Exclusive

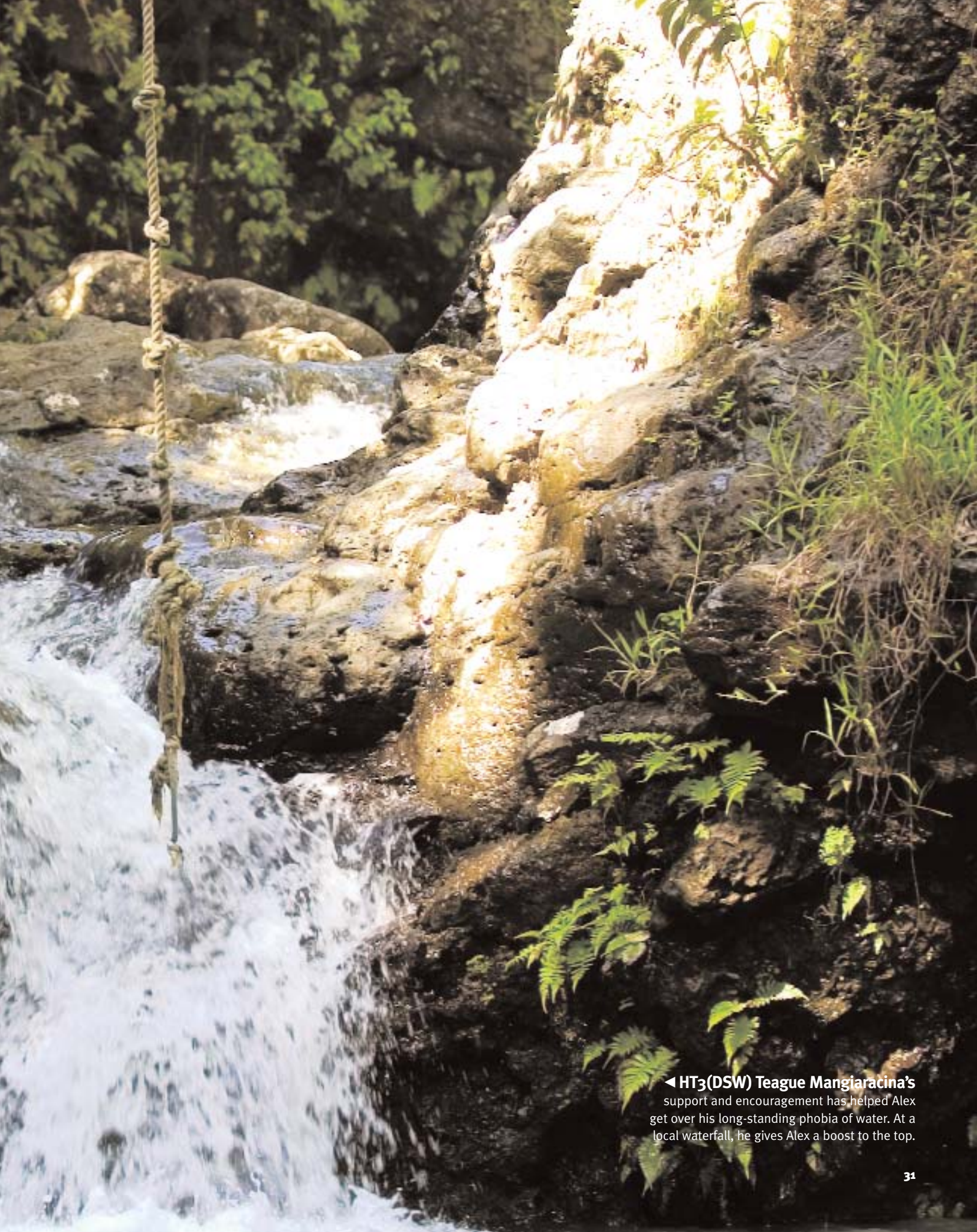
Find more photos online at
www.news.navy.mil/media/allhands/flash/ah200508/feature_2/

brotherly love

Navy diver Teague
Mangiaracina takes
mentorship beyond
the call of duty

Story and photos by JO1(SW) M.J. Darby





◀ **HT3(DSW) Teague Mangiaracina's** support and encouragement has helped Alex get over his long-standing phobia of water. At a local waterfall, he gives Alex a boost to the top.

A child's laughter echoed up through the trees along the mountain trail. "T, where are you? Hurry up. I can hear the water!" Alex yelled excitedly.

Where was the quiet, anti-social and camera-shy boy everyone had described?

"He probably won't talk to you much at first, so if he hides behind me don't take it personally," warned Alex's "Big Brother," Hull Technician 3rd Class (DSW) Teague Mangiaracina the day before this hiking adventure.

"And he doesn't like to have his photograph taken, either," continued the Navy diver attached to Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 1, Pearl Harbor. "I even bought him a little film camera a while back for our outings, but he didn't seem interested in it," Mangiaracina said.

Even Mangiaracina was shocked by the difference in the 8-year-old. "I don't get it," he said. "Alex is never this outgoing."

Only his foster grandmother, Beverley "Grandma" Blake could explain the miraculous transformation.

"It's Teague," she said matter-of-factly. "Ever since meeting his Big Brother, Alex has been slowly coming out of his shell. I can't say enough wonderful things about Teague. I think he's an angel God sent to be with Alex."

Apparently, others have noticed Mangiaracina's influence on Alex as well, because in December he was named Hawaii's Big Brother of the Year for 2004.

"I gotta tell ya, boy was *that* a surprise," said the 30-year-old. "Alex's grandmother wasn't feeling well and couldn't make it to the year-end banquet. I was just sitting at the table enjoying dinner when they began to read off the description of the Big Brother of the Year and thought, 'That guy sort of sounds like me.' Then they called my name!"

Initially though, it took working through a little bit of homesickness and one good commercial for this award-winning Big Brother to offer up his time.

"One day I'm watching TV when that commercial comes on of the Big Brother



taking his Little Brother out to eat. After finishing his sandwich, the Little [Brother] burps and looks up kind of nervously at the older guy. The Big Brother looks at the kid sternly then lets an even bigger belch rip, and they both start laughing. I guess it got to me," he said.

"That sort of made me realize that I don't have to be the best role model in the world, just the best I can be," said the New York native. "Plus, my brothers and I had it kinda rough growing up. Fortunately, I had an uncle who was a positive role model for

▲ **'Grandma'** Blake is an elderly woman whose health is failing, and she's not very mobile these days. Alex ended up spending a lot of time indoors close to her. So, when she came to us she was just looking for some kind of support for Alex," explained Nate Phong.

us. He made a real difference in our lives.

Once his decision was made, it was up to Nate Phong, a Brig Brothers/Big Sisters of Honolulu case manager, to place him with a suitable Little Brother.

"Teague was a perfect match for Alex because he came from a single-parent



► **Pictures of** Mangiaracina's younger brothers lie on the desk next to his wallet. "When I came to Hawaii, I wasn't really looking to do community service," Mangiaracina explained. "But, it was the first time I had been separated from my two brothers for such an extended period of time, and I started missing the closeness I had with them."



▲ **Mangiaracina and Alex** take a break and talk about what to do next.

household himself and had some rough times growing up. He knew the difference a good role model could make," Phong said. "We felt Teague had a lot of qualities that would be beneficial to a youngster who has had a lot of problems such as Alex.

Their hunch paid off on every level for the youngster.

"It was reassuring to hear from Alex's teachers and counselors about the big turnaround Alex has had in his attitude and performance in school since Teague got involved," Phong finished.

Although Blake had been aware of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program for a number of years, the babies she raised as a foster parent for 26 years were never old enough to participate. It wasn't until years later that she turned to the organization for assistance.

Born addicted to crack cocaine, and abandoned by both his mother and father, the infant Alex was soon brought to the door of Grandma Blake, a foster parent for the state of Hawaii who specialized in the care and nurturing of raising drug babies.

Although attempts were made to reconcile the 19-month-old toddler with his mother who had since returned to her home in Korea, only three months passed before she called Blake to say he was too much for her.

Immediately after hanging up the phone, Grandma Blake boarded the first plane headed for Korea and returned a few days later with Alex – this time as his legal guardian. Today, Blake, 74, is working to adopt the boy she's raised since birth.

"I knew from the beginning he was a



▲ **Mangiaracina often reminds** Grandma Blake that Alex is a normal kid, getting into normal trouble. “He was playing with matches? Yeah, I did that,” explains Teague. “He took money out of your purse? Yep, did that, too, when he was younger..”

special boy,” continued Blake. “But I can’t get out as much these days. So when Alex turned six, I signed him up and they matched him with Teague. The first day we met Teague, it was as if he were already family. Alex got a Big Brother, and I got another grandson!”

“Alex is a good kid, but when things don’t go right I remind him we’re going to have to tell his brother,” Blake said. “Then, when Teague comes over, I make Alex explain what he did. He gets his little reprimand from Teague, and Alex listens. Teague is his big brother and his best friend. He means everything to Alex.”

Disciplining Alex is something Mangiaracina realizes is important, but it’s also something he constantly struggles with.

“I feel bad when I have to reprimand the little guy, and I worry whether I’m saying the right things or that I’m too harsh sometimes,” Teague admits. “But then on the few times I’ve talked to Nate about it, he makes it sound as if I might not be stern enough.”

Typically, the two pals spend several hours together on a Saturday or Sunday. But as a special treat, Teague took Alex to the annual Big Brothers/Big Sisters

► **During the** Big Brothers/Big Sisters Survivor campout, Alex enjoyed participating with the other children in team challenges. “The change in this boy has been miraculous,” said Grandma Blake. “Alex used to not talk much. He wasn’t sociable at all. Since he met Teague, he’s more open. He also behaves better now because he respects him so much.”



weekend campout, where Alex was able to spend more time with him as well as other Little Brothers and Sisters on the island.

"I don't want to go camping," Alex had pouted. "I thought we were going bike riding."

"No, that's next weekend," replied Mangiaracina. "Have you ever been camping before? Do you even know what it is?" he questioned.

"No," said Alex stubbornly.

"Well, trust me, you're gonna like it," Mangiaracina reassured.

Although Alex resisted at first, it wasn't long before Alex realized the joys of football, Frisbee, potato sack races, team activities, s'mores, kayaking, sleeping outdoors, dancing and swimming.

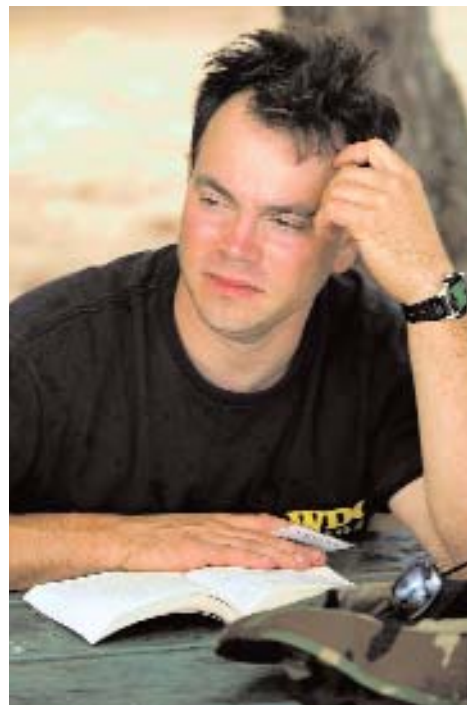
Phong and other staff members at the camp continued to be impressed with the changes in Alex.

"Is this the same sheltered kid I knew before?" Phong asked Alex while tousling the child's hair. "Now you're on the dance floor, playing with other kids and swimming like a fish!" Alex just shrugged, flashed Phong a smile and ran off to join

► Letting Alex spend some time

with his new friends at the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Survivor campout, Mangiaracina kept a close watch over the boy from a distance. "I know it's going to be tough on Alex when I have to leave, but would it have been better for him if I hadn't volunteered at all and we had never met?" Teague asks himself. "I don't believe so."

▼ Although he resisted attending the campout at first, Alex found he enjoyed many new things such as sleeping in a tent, group sports, campfires, and best of all — s'mores. "My camping was good with T," admits Alex. "It was very, very good."





► **A lush Hawaiian landscape** and balmy weather set the scene for the annual Big Brothers, Big Sisters “Survivor” campout.

his new friends at the beach.

Following their weekend outing, the pair returned to Blake’s cozy apartment with a slew of stories for Grandma. After a few minutes, Mangiaracina hugged Grandma and Alex good-bye and

promised, “See ya next Saturday,” before heading home.

Good-byes are always the hardest – especially when they come before a long deployment.

“Alex always gets down when Teague’s gone for a long time,” said Blake. “He was really upset when Teague had to go to Korea for two weeks because he has such bad memories from there. I’m not

sure how he’s going to handle it when Teague is reassigned for good. I worry about that.”

Although Blake and Mangiaracina are equally anxious about the difficulties that may arise from his reassignment later this year, both are positive they can work through it.

“There are a lot of organizations you can volunteer from and then walk away if



▲ **Mangiaracina races** his little brother Alex to a local waterfall for a swim. “I know it sounds like the typical thing everyone says, but I felt that since I had been given so much in life that it was my turn to give a little bit back,” said Mangiaracina. “You know, even though I did it to help someone else out, I still get a lot back from this relationship, too.”

you’re just looking for an eval bullet,” warns Mangiaracina. “Being a Big Brother is not one of them.

“These kids have been let down enough in their lives. When you sign up to be a Big Brother, it’s a long-term commitment. We’ll keep in touch by phone and e-mail, and, hopefully he can come visit me at my next duty station,” he added.

Blake agreed. “It’s going to be so difficult

on Alex when Teague has to leave. But I think it would be great for Alex to go on a trip to see him. I trust Teague completely,” she confided. “So much so, that I’ve made arrangements in my will that if anything should happen to me – and if Teague is willing and able – that Alex’s guardianship should go to him. Then I know Alex will be taken care of – that’s how much I think of Teague.”

“I’d like to see more good people get involved with this program,” Blake lamented. “I see a lot of kids around here without a mom or a dad. They end up getting into swearing, smoking, drinking or even getting into drugs. That’s what’s wrong with these kids; they need a mentor like a Big Brother or a Big Sister. If they can find one like Teague, they’d be lucky. We just love him, we really do.”

Although far more outgoing than he may have been a few months ago, when it comes to his personal thoughts Alex is a boy of few words.

“What do I think about my Brother, T?” asked Alex in response to a query. “He’s good, and smart, and fun to be with. My camping was good with T. It was very, very good. Yeah, it’s been fun having a brother.

It doesn’t matter who we are, we just get out there and play.

“I like him as a friend. A really, truly friend – brothers who stick together,” Alex ended simply, acting sheepish for the first time all weekend.

Deep thoughts from such a young child who just a year ago would have run from the questioner.

In the end, all recognitions and awards aside, there can’t be any bigger reward or better feeling for Mangiaracina than that – earning the love and trust of a little boy in need. ■

Darby is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.

Editor’s note: To learn more about Navy-supported volunteer partnerships, visit the Navy Community Service Program web site at www.mwr.navy.mil/ncsp/index.htm.

Website Exclusive

Find more photos online at www.news.navy.mil/media/allhands/flash/ah200508/feature_3/



Focus on Service

Story and photo by PH1(AW) Shane T. McCoy



Mail Call

Millions of packages flow in and out of the Washington, D.C., area every day, and any one of them could bring our government to a deadly halt.

It's the job of Postal Clerk 2nd Class (SW/AW) Demetrius James to make sure a government stoppage is not caused by any of the mail passing through Anacostia Annex.

"Tons and tons of mail comes through here every day," said James. "If the box rattles or there is no return address, it's a red flag for us."

The key to protecting the capital is the use of large radiation machines similar to the X-ray machines in airports. Every piece of mail is hit with enough radiation to not only kill any virus or chemical inside, but to also melt the occasional compact disk or make a new credit card look like a child's "Shrinky Dink."

"It's not a piece-of-cake job; we sort every piece of mail by hand and radiate everything," says James. "Sometimes it turns the mail yellow and things get destroyed."

Postal clerks may not be considered a front-line defensive job in the Navy, but without James, and many others civilian postal workers like her, a terrorist attack on our capital could not only kill thousands, but also cripple our government's ability to effectively command the world's largest military. ■

McCoy is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.

Goodbye to an old friend

Story by PHCS(AW/SW) Joseph E. Dorey

I read in the paper the other day about the passing of an old friend. She was only 40 years old.

I was glad to know her and proud to serve with her. She was haze gray and traipsing up and down her ladders usually left dark stains on the bottom of your uniform. The temperature in her engine rooms was unbearable. The showers had a push-button nozzle to save precious water.

OI' 66 often suffered from growing pains. But she was home and she was ours.

USS *America* (CV 66) was decommissioned in July 1996. But recently she "set sail" again for one last mission.

After spending the last nine years in a Philadelphia shipyard awaiting a decision on her fate, *America* was towed to sea and used to learn more about the effects of explosives on ships. She did not come back.

My initial reaction was not good. A Sailor's first ship is like your first car, first girlfriend — first adventure. I had always hoped that she would be bought by some city or state and used as a museum. There are many such exhibits around the nation. At the very least, I'd hoped that Congress would name a new super carrier after this great warship. So far that hasn't happened, and I fear she will fade from memory. Not mine, of course.

She was the fifth ship so named, but I hope not the last. Somehow a lot of spirit went down with "the big dog" that day. As a member of *America*'s final deployment crew, I was impressed with her history and perseverance.

She had served honorably in Vietnam as a "youngster." She had launched sorties in the Persian Gulf War from the Red Sea. On her last "Med Cruise" her air wing dropped some of the first ordnance in Bosnia. She came home to Norfolk that year to another Battle "E" award. You could say she wasn't much to look at (especially compared to the latest carriers in the fleet), but she was always more than capable of performing her mission.

I was there to see her being towed out of the Chesapeake Bay on her way to Philadelphia and remembered the sound of CAPT "Benny" Suggs blaring over the IMC, "On the Big Dog! Good morning shipmates. Today we are"

That CO was always good about informing the crew of our

location and mission. Mail Call was very important back then, as there was little e-mail and no web surfing.

But we did have entertainment from the antics of the XO and fire marshal on live TV during "DC Time" and bingo games. And yes, "Groundhog Day" was still the most played movie on the cable (at least it seemed that way).

You could call it entertainment of sorts when we finally ran our semi-annual PRT on the flight deck, in a light rain, sailing North through the Suez Canal. Talk about a slip and slide situation. We really needed a wave off. But we did it and sailed on. It was better than trying to do it on liberty.

That final deployment was the last time I stopped in Trieste, Italy. There was a great little café there, the last one before the bus took us through the shipyard and to our pier. The place had cold beverages and plenty of familiar music.

I couldn't help but laugh a bit when late one night the music turned to an "oldie, but goodie," as they say, and all the crew there joined in. It was the Temptations classic rendition of "My Girl." The song was actually before my time (no, really), but the sight and sound of those guys singing their hearts out in unison was a special moment. The fact that the crew was all male back then probably cut down on the embarrassment factor that a mixed crew might have today. They were not singing about the ship, by the way.

To pass the weeks, on Friday nights, we watched taped prize fights on the VCR in our shop. Not sure you would do that today. Other shops ceremoniously smoked cigars to end their week. I know you wouldn't do that today.

Yes, there was always a proud feeling for me to say that I was a Sailor on *America*. Call it patriotism or whatever, maybe FLS (first love syndrome), I don't know. I hope an appeal to my local congressman and senators will bring back that feeling for Sailors of the future. I'd like to be around when that happens. The hull number will be different, but the "Don't tread on me" spirit will surely be the same. ■



Dorey is the managing editor of All Hands.



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